2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

tion, General W. T. Sherman issued his famous Field Order No. 15: "The islands from Charleston, south, the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea, and the country bordering the St. Johns river, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the settlement of the Negroes."[22]

From the earliest days the islanders tended to be self-sufficient agriculturally. The landowners—black or white—harvested mainly indigo and long-staple cotton, commodities that thrived well on the rich island soil. Rice, by 1724 one of the most profitable staple commodities in the mainland coastal areas,[23] was not grown to any great extent on the islands.[24]

Peter Wood writes convincingly that the West Africans were primarily responsible for the economic success of the flourishing rice crops in the Carolina territory. The cultivation, growth, and processing of rice is an old tradition in West Africa. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rice was grown in most West African areas, and especially heavily near the Gambia River. In the Congo-Angola region, a white explorer once noted that rice was so plentiful that it brought no price at all. During this period West Africans actually sold rice to the slave traders to stock their ships.[25]

Unlike the Europeans, then, who knew little about rice, the transplanted Africans were widely familiar with its cultivation. In fact, rice was so important a part of African culture that its growth and harvest were celebrated each year, just as the growing of yams was celebrated in "yam festivals."[26] In West Africa today there is still a kind of symbolism associated with rice and yams: they are much more than just food to be consumed.[27] Rice continues to be a primary food in both West Africa and the Sea Islands, and its preparation and offering tend to be expressions of fine taste and "good eating."[28]

Until recent years the primary Sea Island commodity was long-staple cotton, a crop that thrives only in light, sandy, saltwater lands. Because of its fine silky texture, it brought excellent prices on the world market, and it was grown along the Atlantic coast from the Santee River of South Carolina to the Florida Everglades.[29] The rapid expansion of cotton production on the islands, as elsewhere, was a major factor in the great demand for West African slaves to work the fields. Perhaps because cotton was a crop new to the slaves, or because the growth and harvest of an inedible crop did not offer the familiar gratification associated with rice, or merely because of the connection

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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South Carolina

with slavery, the mention of cotton in Sea Island folklore and literature generally has negative connotations.

Today neither cotton nor rice is grown to any extent on or around the Sea Islands. Rice was gradually eliminated by the many disastrous floods and storms which frequent the Carolina coast. Cotton was abandoned in favor of more lucrative means of support, especially since the cotton-picking machine eliminated the need for harvesting of cotton by hand. The primary crops now are edible produce, including soybeans, peas, okra, tomatoes, corn, peanuts, and watermelons, and many folk narratives focus on the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of these crops.

Another major food source is fish, shrimp, crabs, oysters, mussels, clams, lobsters, conchs, and sharks, all of which the islanders prepare expertly and variously. Fish has always been important in the local diet. Consider, for example, a resident minister's account of the varieties available around Edisto Island in 1800:

> The creeks, rivers, and seas which indent and surround the island furnish at different and appropriate seasons of the year, a great variety of excellent fish—as the larger drum, the small black drum, bass, rock-fish, sheephead, cavallie, bonnetta, salmon-trout, yellowtail, ale-wife, croaker, plaice, flounder, skate, pike, shad, and catfish, and many others, suitable for the table. Porpoise and sharks frequent the creeks and surrounding waters. Some of the latter are seen and caught of an enormous size. They are considered as just objects of terror by the negroes. And yet, although the fishermen continue hours together waist deep in water, and have often the misfortune of hooking them, they escape with impunity.[30]

Crabbing and fishing are so much a part of Sea Island culture that many children learn the fine art of casting and netting as early as three years old. Some residents who earn their livings from fishing practice an old African method of netting fish in mass. An elderly gentleman explained to me that his grandfather had taught him to beat on the sides of his boat to attract fish and porpoises to the area (see Appendix 1).[A] The porpoises scare schools of fish ahead of them, and the fish are then caught in the nets. In a variant of this method, a group of fishermen will wade out into the water to beat on their drums or other instruments. The more noise they create above and below water, the more

A. [For Appendix 1, see Category 226, pp. 151-155--Analyst]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
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rham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1940), pp. 321–22. The original source for this order is the *Report of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1865–66, Exec. Doc. 11, p. 10.

23. Guion Johnson, *A Social History of the Sea Islands with Special References to St. Helena Island, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1930), p. 18.

24. Though many writers have stated that rice was a Sea Island crop (see, for example, Wood, *Black Majority;* and Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource"), Professor Charles Joyner has indicated to me (through personal communication) that rice was grown not on the Sea Islands but in rice fields adjoining nearby mainland rivers. Rice requires fresh water, and the flooding and draining of rice fields require freshwater rivers moved by ocean tides. Thus Sandy Island had rice fields but the ocean islands did not.

25. Wood, *Black Majority*, p. 59.

26. Ibid., p. 59.

27. Ruth Finnegan, *Limba Stories and Storytelling* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

28. Rice is normally eaten for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in variation with different meats, gumbos, greens, and sauces, many of which are still prepared and eaten on the islands in traditional fashions. Two carry-overs, for example, are a kind of okra soup called *ofey okra* in Igbo and a turnip green dish prepared with bits of meat, onion, hot peppers, and pepper sauce that has its counterpart in Yoruba, Igbo, and Ibebio cultures. In Africa these vegetable and meat dishes are eaten with *fufu* or *gari*, a soft substance about the consistency of bread dough. On the islands, instead of fufu and gari, corn bread is served with the greens or okra soup; small bits are pinched off, mashed together with the fingers, and then dipped and rolled in the vegetable sauce.

29. Guion Johnson, *History of the Sea Islands*, p. 26.

30. Quoted in Crum, *Gullah*, p. 70.

31. This practice was also observed by Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake; see "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource."

32. *Ber* is the Sea Island form of the word *Brer*.

33. Crum, *Gullah*, p. 55.

34. Quoted in ibid., p. 60.

35. This observation may in part answer a question posed by Richard Dorson, an avid researcher and collector of black folktales. Dorson observes that southern blacks drew a fair portion of their folktale material from the barnyards, fields, and woods which formed their environment. "Why they neglected such familiar denizens as the coon and the possum," he comments, "in favor of the rabbit and the fox, and preferred the buzzard over the owl, remain teasing questions" (*American Negro Folktales* [New York: Fawcett, 1967], p. 67). Perhaps the questions are not "teasing" at all. The animals of the tales are intensely interesting to the islanders because they have had to study these animals so closely to learn to hunt them. According to some of the island storytellers—people who are also known for their hunting skills—such animals as the buzzard are revered for their patience. They are often used as foils to much smarter animals like the monkey or the rabbit. On the other hand, the rabbit is renowned for his cunning and his illusionary and evasive skills. Though his teeth are sharp, he has no

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Rev. G. C. Brown

THOSE WERE ROUGH DAYS

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My wife and I've been here since '38. No pastor had lived here the last forty years before we came. And of course by not living with the people, they couldn't know their need and their desire. They wanted somebody to come and live with the people—that's why we came.

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The first thing I found here was extreme poverty. That was during the days of the Depression, and there was no work except the WPA project. That white schoolhouse out there was built as a WPA project. The men on the farms were working for seven cents an hour. Oh yeah, seven cents. And the women, five cents.

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The men plowed; the women did all the farm work. That time they didn't have planters to plant the potatoes. They cut the potatoes, dropped them in the field, and the men did all the work with the plows. That give pretty good farm employment. You had a number of men running plows, the women go along and drop the potatoes, and that give them a good day's work—several days' work in springtime. That give them employment during the planting season.

And the cabbage plant out by hand. Nowadays some have a planter. Some children worked then, but they didn't have too many children that time. There hadn't been so much marrying and going on.

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Those were rough days. Food was short, scarce, didn't have much. The most they ate those days, they ate rice, grits and canned tomatoes. They bought their tomatoes at the store. They were cheap then. They bought the grits. Some made their own grits. They had a few mill. And they used to raise their own rice. There were a lot of rice farms around. They had a way of cleaning it and milling it.

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Most of 'em were poor. Had no income. Very little income. They lived out of the creek. In the summertime they had crabs and shrimp, and in the wintertime had oysters. You could buy right at your door about three times a week, undressed shrimp—five cents a plate. In the wintertime we buy

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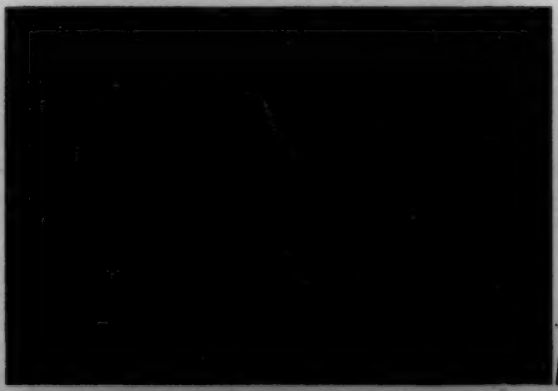

[p.9]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN2
South Carolina
Johns Island

Rev. U. L. Brewer

I BEEN SWALLERIN' BITTER PILLS

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I been swallerin' bitter pills and chewin' dry bones. In the old days they just give me cornbread and sweet potatoes, but still I could plow the hell out of their mules.

Mrs. Isabel Simmons

THAT'S THE WAY I COME UP IN THIS WORLD

159

I come up in a hard time, and I still having a hard time. I was the oldest one in the house, and I had all the work to do. When I was small they put me to tend corn—ten cents per task. Some day I do five task, some day I do six. Tend 'em. If there's two stalks in a hill you kill one off. In September we go and pick some weeds we call Morning Glory.

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Sometime I use to have time to play on Sunday evening, but I couldn't go no place. I couldn't go no further than the house. I get cornstalk and make corncob dolly and play with dirt and spoon. I never went to no dance.

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My mother didn't allow us to leave the house. When they do have something like the Fourth of July or Labor Days, a big drum come from the city. Play drums and horn.

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That's the way I come up in this world.

skilled in bad weather. The best of the inhabitable land has been owned by two or three black families since the last half of the nineteenth century. Most of the present inhabitants are related to each other, at least distantly. A few white sportsmen have established hunting lodges on the uninhabited portions of the island, and a land development company has been draining some marshes in order to build waterfront resort homes. At the time of the present study, however, all people present on a daily basis on the island were members of the black community. The island is well-known to residents of Georgetown County, even though few have visited it. It is generally considered to be a mysterious and somewhat backward place. High school students tell of being teased about coming from the island and being looked upon as somehow different and perhaps unsophisticated. Teachers in mainland schools note the close friendships between island children and the in-group humor characteristic of them; some teachers consider their language distinctive, but others do not.

Historically, the economy of the island was based upon rice. Once at least nine major plantations flourished there, worked and probably managed largely by black labor. Few of the white owners made permanent homes on the island, probably no more than two families at any one time. The majority of the land remains in the hands of white individual owners or corporations, but they remain absentee owners. Long after rice had ceased to be a major factor in the rest

243 433 of the county's economy, it was still cultivated on the river island for the consumption of its inhabitants, with some surplus sold for cash. Two men in their eighties could describe in detail each phase of the long growing season, and the utensils used in processing the ripened grain. During the [464] lifetimes of these men, however, the island made the transition from a subsistence farming economy to one based on 464 laboring jobs held in mainland communities. Typically, young men went to live in nearby towns for periods ranging from two weeks to several years, working at jobs in lumber mills, in shipyards, on ocean-going vessels, and even in New York factories. Other men and women took laboring jobs on farms 243 and plantations closer to the island. The rice crop was still cultivated during this transition period, but by the thirties the cultivation was essentially under the supervision of one older man, a preacher and permanent resident of 243 the island. At times when intensive heavy labor was needed 464 for the crop, many of those who were working off the island returned to help in the harvest. With increasing job opportunities associated with World War II and the availability of motorized transportation, making the boat trip across the water a matter of minutes rather than hours, rice cultivation came to an end. Three successive years of disastrous flood tides in the forties finished the transition period.

464 484 Today most families have at least two members who commute daily to jobs on the mainland. Many of the middle-

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

175 567 Of equal importance, if that be possible, with the native quality of the Gullah vernacular, was the environment under which they lived in this country. They seem to have been imported almost exclusively to the sea-islands and coast of two states, South Carolina and Georgia. This section, from Colonial days to the Civil War, was the richest and most cultured of that part of the South. Rice, the chief low-country crop of that day, was extremely lucrative under slave-labor, as was the silky, long-staple sea-island cotton. Large plantations of thousands of acres were the rule, on which the wealthy planters lived in characteristic, often feudal prosperity.[1]

[243] [248]

000 Even today, two generations after the disintegration of the social forces that brought them into existence, there remain impressive traces of these fine old estates, some abandoned and fallen into ruins, a few still kept up, some turned into hunting preserves, some still being farmed on a smaller scale. They stretch in an irregular chain along the coast, inlets, and tidal rivers, each with the gray-weathered dwelling-house in its moss-draped grove of live-oaks; the big barns and slave-quarters off to one side, consisting of a double row of one-story cabins, now in ruins, lining the "street"; square mile after square mile of woodland, marshland, and level fields, once planted to rice, but

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[194] [199] as it was called then, but to this day (1896) the older ones of that set of negroes, who grew up before the war, speak as pure Gullah as their grandfathers and grandmothers spoke on Ashepoo. They seem to have been scarcely affected in their low-country Gullah speech by the white people that were numerous and all around them and the negroes native to that neighborhood, who talked so differently to themselves."

'If this seems to savor of the high-flown idyllic plantation tradition, fostered by professional Southerners, romantic literature, melodrama, and minstrel balladry, be it recalled that the ideal picture came closest to being realised in tide-water Virginia and in the rice districts of South Carolina. In regard to these localities it would be hard to overstate the facts. "Charles Dudley Warner, for example, dazzled by the sheen of life in the Carolina rice districts exclaimed, 'Nowhere in this leveling age . . . so much splendor'." F. P. Gaines, *The Southern Plantation*, Columbia University Press, 1924, p. 64. "Phillips says of the rice section: 'The towns were in sentiment and interest virtually a part of the plantation community and many prospering townsmen looked toward plantation retirement, carrying, as it did, in some degree, the badge of gentility, as the crown of their careers.'" *Ibid.*, 145, 146.

[113] Crevecoeur (*Letters from an American Farmer*, London, 1782.) called the life around Charleston 'the gayest in America'; "Olmstead himself (*Seaboard Slave States, A Journey Through the Seaboard Slave States*, New York, 1856) refers to the rice planters as 'having less vulgar display and more intrinsic elegance than in any distinct class among us'." *Ibid.*, p. 154.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

535 dances as "The Buzzard Lope," "Juba," "The Mobile Buck," and "The Mosquito Dance" (accompanied by an occasional exclamation of "Slap 'em! Slap 'em!")—and they may be forthcoming. Another interesting dance, done to the tune of "New Rice an' Okra," is used to scuff off the outside husks of the rice and to prepare it for beating in a hand-hewn mortar exactly like that used on the West Coast of Africa (Illustrations 7 and 8).[a] The pestles are heavy, and, to be wielded effectively, require the aid of rhythmic songs.

There are also the ring-play dances, which appear to be a combination of African play songs and the old English play-party or ring games. In most of them, the action reflects white influence; but to have a variation of the Virginia Reel done to an ominous African tune, with the threatening words, "Lawyer's suit!" repeated after and overlapping each narrative phrase, indicates such a fifty-fifty division as is often found in the religious songs.

533 One ring-play song uses "Sangaree" for its refrain, and in so doing gives a clue to its age. Few people today know that ante-bellum planters were refreshed by this West Indian drink which consisted of a chilled mixture of wine, sugar, nutmeg, and water.[14]

535 In the coastal section of South Carolina and Georgia, the ring-shout, a semi-religious survival of African dancing—not a vocal performance as the name implies—533 is accompanied by a melodious chant which generally concerns itself with the sim-534 plest of Biblical narratives and admonitions, as in

> O Eve, where is Adam? O Eve—
> Adam in the Garden pickin' up leaves.

533 In "Knee-bone I Call You, Knee-bone Bend," tones are used that baffle any transcription; and the leader frequently drops a whole octave in singing the rhythmically prolonged You, to the wonderment of white musicians unused to the trick so often employed by the old-time Negroes. In this musical chant warning is given that on Monday morning, and all other days of the week, the Lord calls upon you to get down on your knees and pray. On one of the old Heyward plantations bordering on the Combahee River there occurs a dance (clearly an African survival) 535 171 which, from its description, seems similar to one I saw performed by primitive Negroes in the north of Haiti. There is another exotic performance on St. Simon's

[14] "Julep sangaree" was in use before 1840. Dr. L. D. Turner believes, however, that the song got its refrain from the African word sangsri, meaning a ring dance.

A, [For Illustration 7 & 8, see Categories 171 & 252, plates facing pp. 48 & 49--Analyst]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

RICE SONGS

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Growing rice was a thriving industry along the Ogeechee, Altamaha, and Satilla rivers a century ago, but today it is difficult to find even a handful of grain to demonstrate how it was beaten. At Hofwyl Plantation, the last in Glynn County to grow rice to any extent, I asked Jerry Rutledge about the songs that were used for planting rice, and getting it ready to eat. He gave me these appropriate lines:

[539]

John say you got to reap in the harvest what you sow
John say you got to reap in the harvest what you sow
If you sow it in the rain, you got to reap it jus' the same
You got to reap in the harvest what you sow.

He explained how the rice sheaves, about a foot through, and tied with a twist of straw, were whipped with "frails"; they were laid in parallel rows on a large sheet on the floor with the butt ends out. When two Negroes "t'rashed" together, they always sang as they faced each other. The short part of the flail which flew in the air in a seemingly reckless fashion was called a "bob," and it was rather important to have its gyrations rhythmically controlled. As soon as one side of a sheaf was clear of rice it was turned over and the other side whipped. By the time the string was broken the grain was in a long row in the middle.

Julia Walker, born near Riceboro in Liberty County, gave me precisely the same description of the work, and sang the following song as she demonstrated how the "frail" was used. Frankly, I was skeptical of the strength of the rawhide that attached the bob to the stick, and kept well out of range:

[539]

Turn sinner turn—sinner wouldn't turn
Turn sinner turn—sinner wouldn't turn
My Lord call you—wouldn't come
I know sinner too late, too late
O too late I know, sinner, too late.
Church bell ring—you wouldn't come
Preacher preach—an' you wouldn't come
My Lord call you—an' you wouldn't come
I know sinner too late, too late
O too late, sinner, too late.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

Julia said that when only a small amount of rice was to be thrashed, the grain was stripped from the straw by hand, and put on a good clean floor. With a quick and effective dance step, the outer husk was scuffed off. On Sapelo the work was done to a similar step, with these words:

Peas an' the rice done done
Higho—Higho!
Beaufort boat done come
Higho—Higho!
How do you know—done heard it blow
Higho—Higho!

On St. Simon's, Julia Armstrong sings still another version:

New rice an' okra—Nana—Nana! [18]
Eat some an' leave some—Nana—Nana!
Beat rice to bum-bum
Eat some an' leave some.

I am told that Old Adam Proctor hoed rice to the tune of:

Way over yonder in that new bright worl'
Poo' sinner got a home at las'

and tied up the sheaves to:

Do Lord remember me—Do Lord remember me
Way over in Beulah Lan'—Do Lord remember me.

A shout song was often used for the rice dance. The following lines indicate how the rhythm changed. While walking around in a circle with a preliminary scuffle, the "t'rashers" sang the slow part as in shouting.

Sheep know his shepher's voice
Yes Lord, I know the way.
Sheep know his shepher's voice
Yes Lord, I know the way.

[18] According to Dr. Turner, "nana" means grandmother.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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St. Simon's Island

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You know the way an' you wouldn't come home
Yes Lord, I know the way.
Every sheep know his shepher's voice
Yes Lord, I know the way.

[535] The faster part was sung as two hops were made on one foot while the other did the scuffing.

Make a jump, jump for joy!
Make a jump, jump for joy!

This phrase was repeated over and over, with the variation:

Sheep jump, jump for joy!

• 243 The planters believed that rice was only good when freshly beaten,[17] and the sheaves kept for family use were put in a well-ventilated mouse-proof loft. The commercial rice was threshed in a mill, but the husks were left on, and even in cities, in the South, the rice was beaten fresh every day. The mortars were generally hollowed out of cypress or hard pine logs and used upright, although on Sapelo I have [412] seen some made of immense pieces of squared timber laid flat so that the beating took place against the grain. The pestles had two ends, one sharp for bruising the husks and removing them, the other flat for whitening. Boys or women generally did the beating. They would grasp the pestles in the middle, raising and letting [461] them fall so quickly and evenly, to the rhythm of what was more like a chant than a song, that the task was not considered difficult.

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[17] William Ellis in his History of Madagascar, 1838, makes it clear that our early rice planters got their ideas about the culture and preparation of rice for the table directly from Madagascar. In Seed from Madagascar Duncan Clinch Heyward tells us that the seed of the Carolina Gold rice was brought from that land by a sea captain about the year 1685, but Mr. Ellis furnishes the African end of the picture. After describing planting and harvesting methods, he explains the laborious process by which rice was made ready for cooking. "The rice, which is kept in the husk in a sort of granary, is made ready for use in such quantities only as the daily consumption of the family may require." In minute detail he explains that it is then beaten in a mortar by two people using large wooden pestles, about five feet in length, so as to break and remove the outer husk without breaking the grain. The rice is taken out, and separated from the husk by winnowing; it is then beaten in the mortar a second time for the purpose of taking off the inner skin. The process is repeated a third time; tossed again in the winnowing-fan, then washed and cooked. It was reported by Francis Moor that on the West Coast of Africa men worked the corn ground, and women and girls the rice ground. Jobson, another West African traveler, says: "the wives do all the hard labor such as cleaning and pounding rice . . . which is done in mortars with great staves." One explorer mentioned that rice was so plentiful in Kongo and Angola that it hardly bears any price.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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Georgia
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PEAS AN' THE RICE

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(243)

In her youth, Julia Walker employed these rhythmic lines to help in thrashing rice on the floor.[18]

Peas an' the rice, peas an' the rice
Peas an' the rice done done done done
Peas an' the rice, peas an' the rice done done done done.
New rice an' okra, eat some an' lef' some
Peas an' the rice, peas an' the rice done done done done.

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[18] James A. Grant in a Walk across Africa tells of many interesting things he saw in 1861 on the way from Zanzibar to Uganda. "On the third of April the rice harvest was being gathered. . . . The reapers consisted of negro women and girls, who sang pleasantly. . . . The thrashing of the rice was novel. A quantity of ears was placed upon a cow's hide, slaves in irons were made to work it with their toes and feet, and winnow it in the wind; and after being thoroughly sun-dried upon a clear space of cow-dunged ground, it was fit for the process of shelling in the large pestle and mortar. If a considerable amount was to be thrashed, a bludgeon answered the purpose of the negroes' feet. . . . If our Seedees had to clean rice in the wooden mortar, a dozen hands would set about the work of two. It could not be done without those who worked beating time with the pestle to their song, the lookers-on clapping hands and stamping their feet. The work and song never ceased till the rice was pounded almost into dust;—such joyous reckless creatures are these simple Africans!" To the Southerner of the nineteenth century this account presents a familiar picture.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

HARD TIME IN OLE VIRGINNY

243 On Sapelo, in hunting up Emma Johnson's twins, I came upon such a picture as must have been common in plantation days. Under the immense live oaks, two boys were beating rice in a home-made mortar. Chickens were all about, picking up stray grains. A couple of fanners were on the ground ready to fan the rice as soon as the hulls were loosened in the mortar. Fanning, as can be imagined, is done by jumping the rice in the flat basket and letting the wind do the rest; [19] but I noticed that Emma was thrifty, and the rice hulls—which looked like bran—fell on oilcloth laid on the ground. She told me they were to be fed to the pigs. The boys were "shamed" and stopped singing when I came up, but there was no shyness about Emma. She seized one of the pestles in the middle and sang a combination of the shanty, "Hard Time in Ole Virginny," the religious song, "Aye Lord, Buddin' of the Fig Tree," and a dance song, "My Ole Missus Promise Me."

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Summer comin' again
Hard time in ole Virginny.
Comin' in the rainbow
Hard time in ole Virginny.
Comin' in the cloud
Hard time in ole Virginny.
My ole missus promise me
Hard time in ole Virginny.
When she die she set me free
Hard time in ole Virginny.
She live so long
Hard time in ole Virginny.
Her head got bald
Hard time in ole Virginny.

[821]

[19] *If there is no wind, the one who does the fanning whistles for it.*

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
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A. B. A. B. A.

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The rhythm of this nonsensical Butler Island song enables the rice beaters to do work which would otherwise be extremely tiresome.[20] It continues as long as the work lasts, with no change in rhythm and very little in the words.

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Uncle July mortal man, stan' right by de doo'
An' see how y'r rice done mash.[21]
An' A. B. A. B. A.
An' A. B. A. B. A.
An' A. B. A. B. A. B. A.
Go A. B. go
Go A. B. go
July'll cut y'r win'.
A. B. A. B. A.
A. B. A. B. A.
An' July'll cut y'r win'.
July de mortal man
July cut y'r win'.
A. B. A. B. A.
An' A. B. A. B. A.
Go Lizzy go, Billy goin' t' cut y'r win'.
Go Emma go, Gally goin' t' cut y'r win'.

[20] Mrs. Cate tells me that each plantation had its particular songs for beating rice, just as its rowing songs were unlike those of other plantations.

[21] The footnote on page 232 suggests that the "reckless" Africans pounded rice in the same careless fashion.

[191]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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I GWINE T' BEAT DIS RICE

533 243 "J. P." learned this half-chanted composition from his grandfather, Old Quarterman. He never sings the words twice alike, but the rhythm is always the same.

533 539

I gwine t' beat dis rice
Gwine t' beat 'um so
Gwine t' beat 'um until the hu'ks come off
Ah hanh hanh (nasal)
Ah hanh hanh.
Gwine t' cook dis rice when I get through
Gwine t' cook 'um so
Ah hanh hanh.
Ah hanh hanh.
Gwine f' eat mh belly full
Ah hanh hanh
Ah hanh hanh.

ROWING SONGS

501 533 461 175 A hundred years ago, when boats offered the most comfortable and convenient mode of transportation, and provided the sea islands of South Carolina and Georgia with their only means of communication with the mainland, the rowing songs were an important adjunct to the work of the oarsmen. English travelers rarely failed to mention them. Captain Basil Hall in his *Travels in North America* (1827–28) tells of leaving Darien—"A neat little village"—and proceeding down the current to St. Simon's Island "in a canoe, some thirty feet long, hollowed out of a cypress tree. The oars were pulled by five smart negroes, merry fellows and very happy looking. . . . They accompanied their labor by a wild sort of song not very unlike that of the Canadian voyageurs, but still more nearly resembling that of the well-known Bunder-boatmen of Bombay." [22]

Fanny Kemble frequently mentioned the singing of the Butler Island oarsmen in her *Journal*, written ten years later. In 1845, Sir Charles Lyell [23] tells of being met at Darien by Mr. Hamilton Couper, who came down the river from Hopeton "in a

[171] [22] The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* say that "Mr. E. S. Philbrick was struck with the resemblance of some of the rowing tunes at Port Royal to the boatmen's songs he had heard upon the Nile."

[23] Second Visit to the United States.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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long canoe, hollowed out of the trunk of a single cypress and rowed by six negroes, who were singing loudly and keeping time to the stroke of their oars." He went on to say: "For many a mile we saw no habitations, and the solitude was profound; but our black oarsmen made the woods echo to their song. One of them taking the lead, first improvised a verse, paying compliments to his master's family, and to a celebrated black beauty of the neighborhood, who was compared to the 'red bird.' The other five then joined in the chorus, always repeating the same words. Occasionally they struck up a hymn, in which the most sacred subjects were handled with strange familiarity, and which, though nothing irreverent was meant, sounded oddly to our ears, and, when following a love ditty, almost profane."

Lyell's account of his canoe trip from Hopeton to visit Mr. Couper's summer residence on St. Simon's Island, fifteen miles distant, is of interest for several reasons. In describing the Negro houses on Butler Island, where the party landed on their way, he tells us they "were neat, and whitewashed, all floored with wood, each with an apartment called the hall, two sleeping rooms, and a loft for the children" —which is contrary to what Fanny Kemble had written about the selfsame houses a few years earlier. He also mentioned seeing ricks of rice raised on props five feet high, to protect them from the sea, which, during hurricanes, has been known to rise five or six feet. His observations on the mental development of the slaves are particularly significant: "It is evident that on these rice farms, where the negroes associate with scarcely any whites, except the overseer and his family, and have but little intercourse with the slaves of other estates, they must remain far more stationary than where, as in a large part of Georgia, they are about equal in number to the whites, or even form a minority. . . . In Glynn County, where we are now residing, there are no less than four thousand negroes to seven hundred whites,[24] whereas in Georgia generally there are only 281,000 in a population of 691,000 or more whites than colored people."

I give these figures because they explain why more distinctive slave songs can be found in the rice swamps and cotton plantations of the adjoining sea islands than in the Piedmont section where Anglo-Saxon influence has always predominated. In all probability we have the malaria mosquito and the absentee landlords to thank for this. In Africa the black race had developed an immunity to malaria—which they

[24] About the same ratio as when I first went to St. Simon's. Charles Spalding Wylly states that in 1810 almost every acre of arable land on St. Simon's was under cultivation. There were fourteen plantations and a slave population of about 1200.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942,
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are now losing—and the resistance of the slaves to "the miasma of the rice fields" enabled them to take care of the crop during the "pestilential season" with the minimum of white supervision. In consequence, all white residents who could leave [25] fled at nightfall to the "salts"—as the sea marshes were called—or to the dry and higher pine land, whichever might be nearer, and the Negroes were left very much to themselves. It requires no stretch of the imagination to assume that the beloved rhythms and dances that had been brought from Africa were kept alive in just this way. For which let me say—God be praised! I have never been able to believe that all virtue was vested in the white man or his music.

Another statement of Lyell's is so accurate that it should be given here. He tells us that "The slaves identify themselves with the master, and their sense of their own importance rises with his success in life." Mrs. Shadman, who knew all the ex-slaves on St. Simon's, told me that Maum Rhina at Cannon's Point was heard to say: "I hol' my head jus' as high as my Missus. I'se a Wylly nig'ah." The Wylly Negroes always felt they were superior to those of the Hazzards, who lived on the adjoining plantation. The feeling of animosity that has persisted for more than a century among the descendants of the slaves of the two plantations may be because of the duel over a boundary dispute, in which young Wylly was killed by his neighbor, Dr. Hazzard.

In spite of the Negroes being passionately fond of music and dancing, the activity of the Baptist and Methodist missionaries was such before 1845 that Lyell tells us: "On the Hopeton Plantation above twenty violins have been silenced." The ban on secular music was the same in the vicinity of Beaufort, South Carolina. The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* reported that they never saw a musical instrument among the Port Royal freedmen, and mentioned that the last violin, owned by a "wordly man," disappeared from Coffin's Point in 1861. They expressed regret that they could not obtain enough secular songs to make a division by themselves, and went on to say: "It is . . . already becoming difficult to obtain these songs. Even the 'spirituals' are going out of use on the plantations, superseded by the new style of religious music, 'closely imitated from the white people.' " The statement made by the editors that "The same songs are used for rowing as for shouting," holds true on the coast of Georgia, and it is interesting to find that the identical tunes were favorites the length of the sea-island chain between the Peedee and the Satilla Rivers. (Map, page xxxii.)

The similarity of the speech, customs, and music of the Gullah Negroes through-

[25] The terms of the overseer's contract required his presence on the plantation except under urgent circumstances.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
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101 of slavery? Certainly there is something to be said in favor of the accuracy of the "Gullah or Angola" derivation.

THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE GULLAH DIALECT

197 Gullah has been called the most African of any of our Negro dialects, yet it can be traced back in practically every detail to English dialect speech. There has long been a popular belief in this country to the effect that Southern white speech is what it is because of the Negro. This idea needs to be reversed, for both the Negro and the white man in the South speak English as they learned it from the latter's ancestors. An understanding of the historical and cultural factors pertaining to the relations of whites and Negroes in the early days of slavery in South Carolina is essential to an appreciation of the origin of the Gullah dialect. These may be sketched very briefly.

175 Speaking of the environment in which the Gullah dialect was born, Smith says:[8]

(243) (248) (567) 175 567 (178) This section, from Colonial days to the Civil War, was the richest and most cultured of that part of the South. Rice, the chief low-country crop of that day, was extremely lucrative under slave-labor, as was the silky, long-staple sea-island cotton. Large plantations of thousands of acres were the rule, on which the wealthy planters lived in characteristic, often feudal prosperity. . . . Before the war, each plantation was a little world apart. The slaves lived together, segregated in their own special quarters. The Negroes outnumbered the whites in the ratio of tens and hundreds to one, and only the house-servants and body-servants came into close contact with their owners. The large majority of field-hands habitually saw only each other, their overseers, and occa-

[8] *Gullah*, pp. 9-10.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
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While thus exploiting the natural resources of the Island, the settlers raised only provision crops and hogs.

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Although rice culture[4] was begun in South Carolina before 1690 and had become one of the staple commodities by 1724, rice was never raised to any extent on St. Helena Island. Rice culture during the colonial period was confined for the most part to the inland swamps which could be flooded from fresh-water ponds and rivers, as, for example, Combahee River. Salt water is poisonous to the rice plant,[5] and St. Helena Island has only a few small fresh-water ponds. In these few ponds some rice was raised of a different variety from the famous Madagascar rice, but the amount was necessarily small.

INDIGO CULTURE

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Almost from the first settlement of South Carolina, indigo was grown in the province and at intervals a bounty was allowed for its production, but it was not until near the middle of the eighteenth century that it became an important article for exportation.[6] In it St. Helena Island found a staple which supplemented and to some extent supplanted the provision crops and the export of naval stores. As early as 1748 the dye was exported to Eng-

[4] See A. S. Salley, Jr., "The Introduction of Rice Culture into South Carolina," *Bulletins of the Historical Commission of South Carolina*, no. 6. For a discussion of rice culture during the ante-bellum period see Edmund Ruffin, *Report of the Commencement and Progress of the Agricultural Survey of South Carolina for 1843*, and R. F. W. Allston, *Essay on Sea Coast Crops*, which appears also in *De Bow's Review*, XVI, 589-615.

[5] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*, p. 469.

[6] In a letter written by Elizabeth (usually abbreviated to Eliza:) Lucas in 1739 she refers to her efforts to produce indigo on her father's plantation in South Carolina. This has led some writers to assert that she first planted indigo in South Carolina and that from her experiments the great indigo industry in the province developed. The records of the province show that some indigo was produced in South Carolina before Miss Lucas was born.

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CHAPTER IX

THE AFTERMATH

A ST. HELENA PICTURE IN 1865

IT WAS SUNDAY in May, 1865. The sandy road, covered in the low places with a top dressing of oyster shells, led off among the cotton fields down the Island. On either side were sagging wire fences, reminders of plantation boundaries before the war, the wire sometimes propped by drooping posts, at other times deeply embedded in the trunks of fine trees forming magnificent avenues.

Here and there were small frame houses, with narrow porches and four or five rooms, the residences of former overseers. Rude pine-log cabins, newly built, and clapboarded shanties leaning crazily in the mid-day sun dotted the fields. Gardens of growing vegetables separated the cabins from the rows of cotton that extended away as far as one could see. Little stakes occasionally marked off private holdings, sometimes the only boundaries in fields of a hundred or more acres of cotton. Just beyond was a large tract lying fallow, covered with a luxurious growth of cassina and dewberries, or perhaps a young forest of pines had sprung up among cotton furrows which, though idle for many years, were yet plainly visible.

The cotton was small, for it was not more than four weeks out of the ground, but the corn was knee high. Neat ridges were already piled up about the cabins waiting until the young sweet potato slips were large enough for transplanting. Here the fields were beautifully clean, carefully hilled up with the hoe by the women and old